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3 October 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: At sessions on 30 September and 1 October, the constituent assembly exhibited a tendency to digress somewhat from its constitution-drafting functions, but stopped short of creating a controversy with the government.

On 1 October, the assembly adopted in principle a resolution which urged the government to release political prisoners now under detention. However, controversy on this delicate issue was probably avoided by the resolution's general wording, which left to the government the decision as to which specific individuals and groups merited amnesty. Government leaders have been considering this issue from various standpoints, and actually may have welcomed the assembly's resolution.

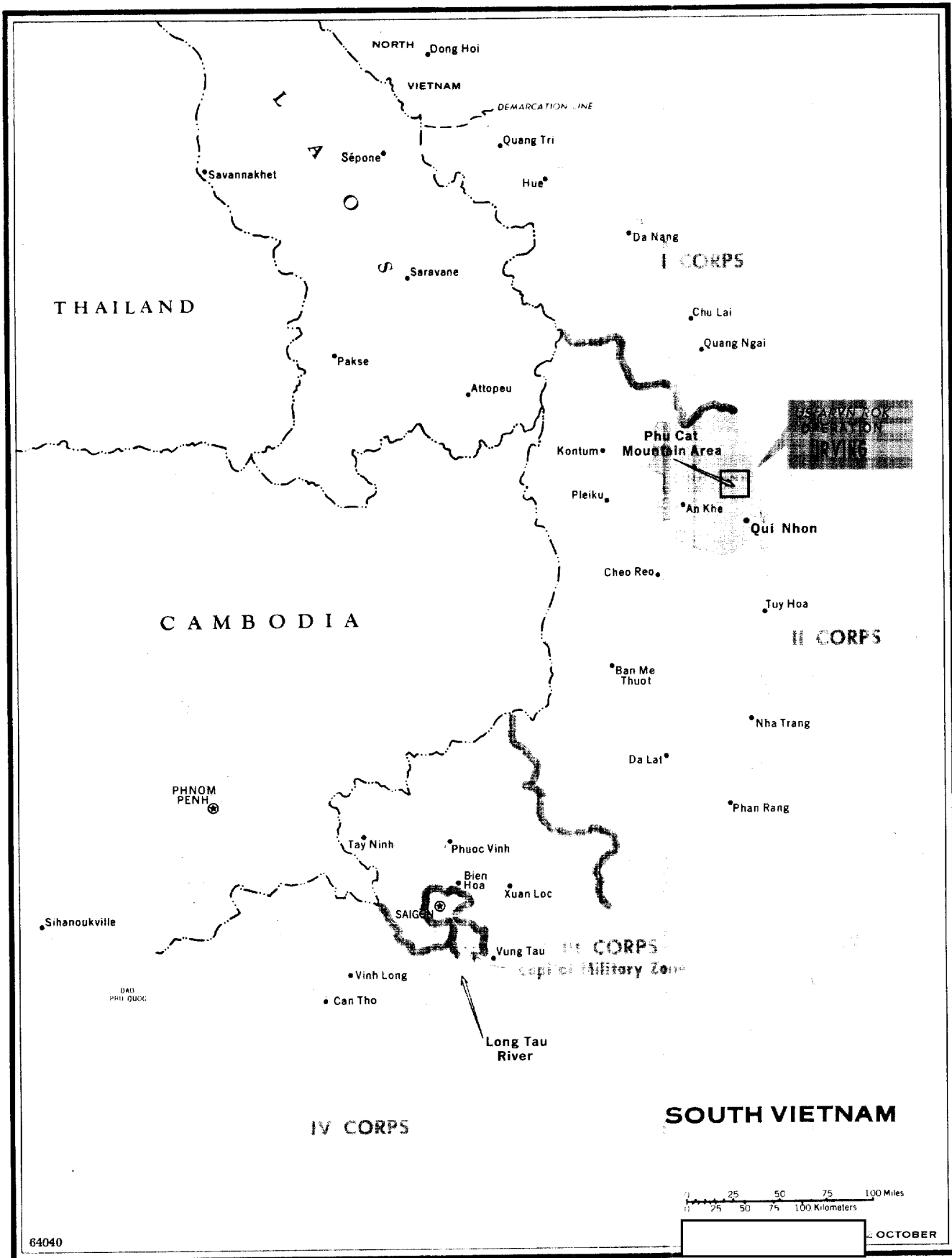
Other diverse accomplishments by the assembly this weekend included the establishment of a committee for flood relief in the delta area south of Saigon, and the drafting of general messages to the United Nations and various other groups. The assembly also made some progress in line with its constitution-drafting function by creating subcommittees which will begin to work on procedural rules for the assembly and to examine the credentials of its elected deputies. Work on the constitution itself will probably not begin until late this month or early in November.

Among other developments, Chief of State Thieu reportedly reprimanded IV Corps commander General Quang in mid-September about rampant corruption in the delta area.

[redacted] General Thieu implied to Quang that the ruling Directorate would take action if the corruption continued. Deputy Premier

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General Co had received a similar warning from Premier Ky earlier. [REDACTED] although Directorate members are disturbed by the activities of Quang and Co, little can be done about the problem at present without straining military unity.

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The Military Situation in South Vietnam: US combat forces participated in 14 of the 33 battalion-sized or larger ground operations conducted in South Vietnam on 1 and 2 October.

The weekend's most significant action occurred in coastal Binh Dinh Province where, on 1 and 2 October, elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division engaged Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops in Operation IRVING approximately 31 miles north of Qui Nhon. One hundred ninety Communist soldiers have been killed and 164 captured, as against US casualties of six killed and 28 wounded. Three US helicopters were reportedly downed by enemy ground fire, but all were subsequently recovered.

Operation IRVING is a scheduled 14-day search-and-clear operation by five US, four South Korean, and four South Vietnamese battalions targeted against enemy troop concentrations in the Phu Cat Mountain area of Binh Dinh Province. The enemy units contacted in the 1 October engagement were probably elements of the mixed Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army 610th Division which is accepted by MACV as operating in this general area.

Communist-initiated military activity during the weekend was highlighted by the mining and sinking on 2 October of a South Vietnamese Navy landing craft (LCM) conducting ground-support operations along the Long Tau River, about 16 miles south-southeast of Saigon. Of those aboard the LCM, ten US and five Vietnamese naval personnel were wounded and three Americans are missing. (Map)

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Communist China: Chinese pronouncements in connection with the 17th anniversary of the regime revealed no changes in the main lines of foreign and domestic policy, or in the Peking leadership.

Defense Minister Lin Piao, who gave the main speech at the mammoth 1 October National Day review in Peking, again promised "resolute support" to the Vietnamese Communists. He also repeated charges that Soviet leaders are colluding with the US to promote peace talks on Vietnam. This was the first open attack on Soviet leaders at a National Day ceremony.

While Lin was speaking, most Soviet bloc diplomats left the meeting in protest. Moscow's congratulatory message to the Chinese was cooler and more formal than last year's. It repeated Moscow's past calls for unity and solidarity.

On the domestic front, Lin Piao said that the current leadership is still attacking powerful party officials who "take the capitalist road." This has been the main theme of each of Lin's speeches since he became the regime's number-two man in August.

No new change in party standing of top leaders was revealed in the line-up of officials who appeared with Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao at the review. Although Chief of State Liu Shao-chi occupied a prominent position, this does not indicate that he retains any significant party authority, since the review was a state rather than a party occasion. Liu was formerly Mao's deputy in the party.

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The New China News Agency drew attention to Mao's apparent good health, pointing out that after spending more than six hours on the reviewing stand during the day, Mao returned to Tienanmen Square in the evening for another celebration.

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Laos: Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma has moved one step closer to securing the dissolution of the National Assembly.

On 30 September, following a discussion at a Council of Ministers meeting, King Savang stated that since a majority of the government favored dissolving the assembly, a formal request for dissolution would be sent to the King's Council. He said that he would abide by his council's decision.

The US Embassy in Vientiane believes that the King's Council will take a formal vote on 3 or 4 October. There are conflicting reports on how the council will vote.

The King is expected to go to Vientiane on 5 October, presumably to lend his stabilizing presence as the political crisis nears its climax.

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NOTES

Nigeria: Belated exercise of effective leadership by Northern authorities over their troops appears for the present to be checking large-scale mob violence against Easterners in parts of the North. This suggests that although discipline is very poor among the troops, significant numbers of them are still responsive to firm directives from above. A critical test of the degree of control existing over these troops will occur this week if a plan for summary trials of selected personnel accused of excesses against civilians is carried out. [REDACTED]

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Yugoslavia - East Germany: The Yugoslav - East German agreement to raise diplomatic relations to ambassadorial level is a significant achievement in Ulbricht's quest for international recognition. The agreement came on 1 October at the end of the East German leader's first official visit to Belgrade. Ulbricht probably expects the Yugoslav action to help persuade other nonaligned countries to recognize East Germany. Belgrade went ahead with the move aware that it will further worsen already strained relations with West Germany. [REDACTED]

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